

coastal plain
escarpment
plateau

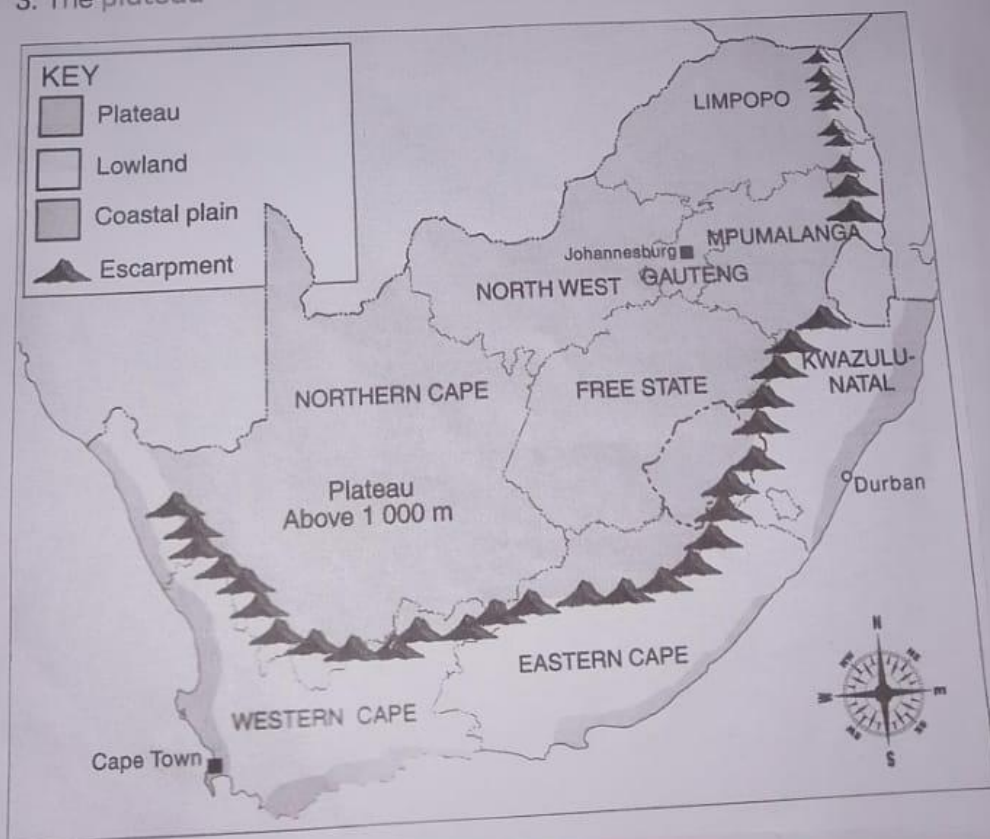
a flat area near the coast
steep land on the edge of a plateau
large area of flat land, quite high above sea level

South Africa's high and low areas

We can divide South Africa into three main areas. Each area is a different height above sea level. Remember sea level is the level of the sea at the coast.

South Africa's three main physical areas are:

1. The coastal plain
2. The escarpment
3. The plateau



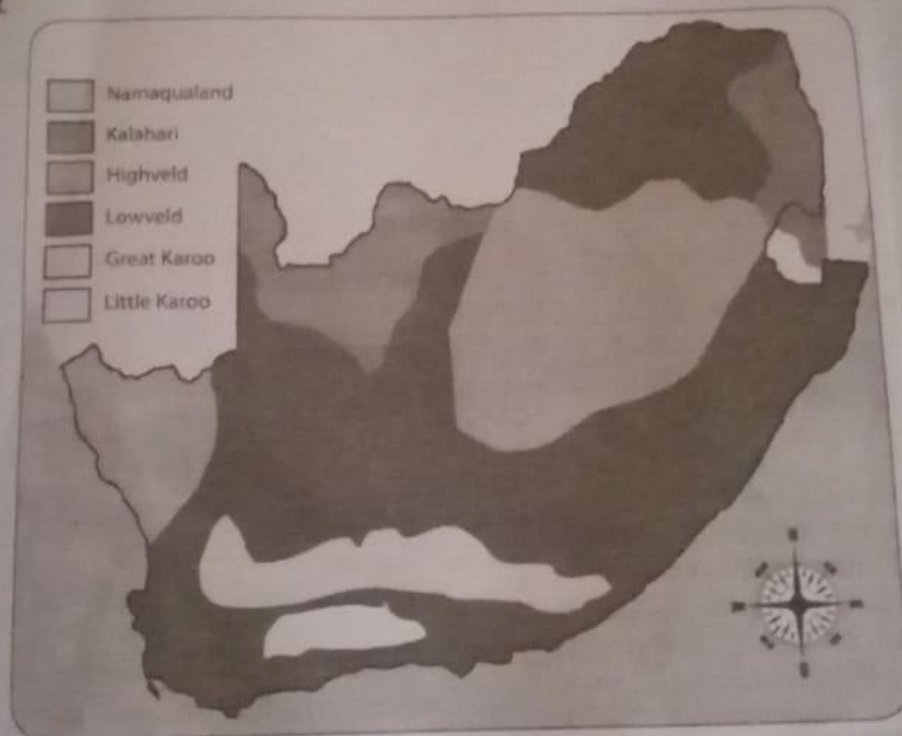
Physical areas

The map below divides South Africa into the following smaller physical areas:

1. Highveld
2. Lowveld
3. Kalahari
4. Great Karoo
5. Little Karoo
6. Namaqualand

Things that make the six physical areas different are:

- height
- size
- rain.

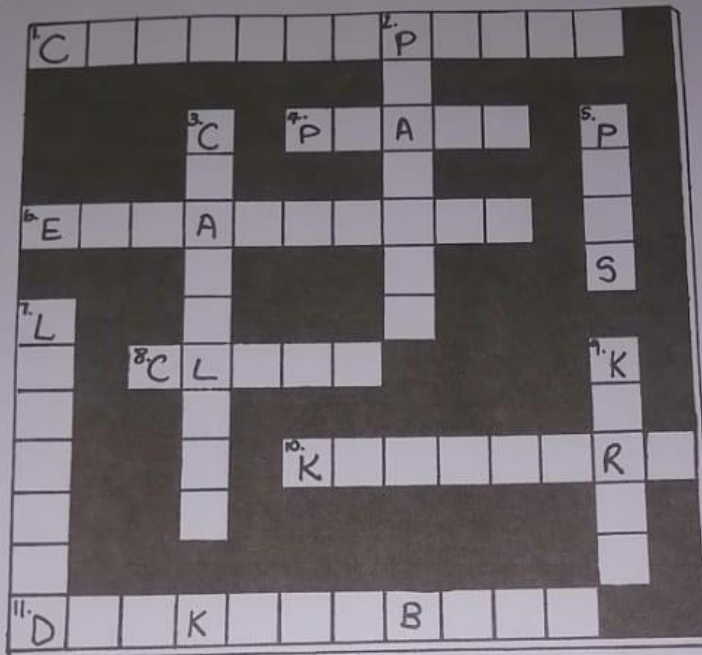


On the map, note that:

- The Great Karoo is next to the Little Karoo. On the ground, the two areas look almost the same. The Great Karoo is slightly higher above sea level.
- Namaqualand forms a large part of Northern Cape Province. The land is mostly flat, with some rocky mountains and cliffs.
- The Kalahari is a huge area of desert which stretches from Botswana, north of South Africa's border, into the Northern Cape.

Fill in the crossword

Use the clues to fill in the crossword. Some letters have been written in to help you.



Across

1. The narrow strip of land next to the coastline.
4. A large flat area.
6. The edge of the plateau.
8. A very steep rock face.
10. The lowest part of the plateau in South Africa.
11. A mountain range that forms the escarpment.

Down

2. The high-lying area in the central part of South Africa.
3. The boundary between the land and the sea.
5. Another name for a gap in a mountain.
7. The area that lies between the Drakensberg Mountains and the Lebombo Mountains.
9. Very dry areas found south of the escarpment.

Rivers

Where rivers begin and end

It is easy to see the high and low places on a map when you follow a river from its **source** in the mountains, to the **river mouth** or where it ends in the sea. This is because water always flows from higher places to lower places.



There are big rivers and tiny streams, fast rivers and slow rivers, muddy waters and clear waters and they all flow DOWNHILL!

This photograph shows a river flowing downhill.

The concept of river systems

Small streams can join together to become rivers. Smaller rivers can flow into bigger rivers. A **stream** or river that flows into a bigger river is called a **tributary**.

A river collects water from its different tributaries. Rivers and streams that join together are all in the same **catchment area**. They are all in the same big basin of mountains and hills that 'catch' the water as it flows downhill. Together, all the rivers and streams in a catchment area, make a **river system**.



This photograph was taken from an aeroplane. It shows a pattern of streams and rivers as they flow into one another on their journey down towards the sea. Notice how the different tributaries join together and flow into the main river.

New words

- **source** – the start of something such as river or stream
- **river mouth** – where a river flows into the sea
- **stream** – a small river
- **tributary** – a stream or river that flows into a bigger river
- **catchment area** – the area drained by a river and its tributaries
- **river system** – all the rivers and streams in a catchment area

ACTIVITY Check your understanding of words about rivers



A diagram of a river system in a catchment area

1. Use all the information on page 33 and what you learnt earlier in this topic to provide the correct word for each of the labels in this picture. (Write only the letter and the word.)

A The of this river is in the mountains.

B A _____ is a small river.

C Here the river flows over a _____.

D This is a _____ of the bigger river that it flows into.

E The streams and rivers flow down _____ between the hills.

F The river flows across the flat _____ before it gets to the sea.

G This point where the river flows into the sea is the river _____.

H This dent in the coastline is called a _____.

I All these rivers are in the same _____ area.

J All the rivers in this picture make up one river _____.

tributary

catchment

bay

source

coastal plain

waterfall

stream

valleys

system

mouth

People and the coast

There are many reasons why people live and work near the coastal plain area.

Reasons why people live and work in the coastal plain:

1. The area is close to the sea for fishing.
2. There are harbours for ships.
3. The land is flat for building things.
4. The soils are good for farming.
5. There are big rivers for water and transport.

How people change the land

People change the land in many ways.

- Farmers cut down trees to make fields.
- People dig into the land to make mines and quarries.
- People build towns and cities that cover the land with buildings.
- Roads and railways change the land.
- People build dams on rivers.

Building dams

People make dams by building walls across rivers. The river water spreads out behind the wall to make a large man-made lake.

Ways dams change the land

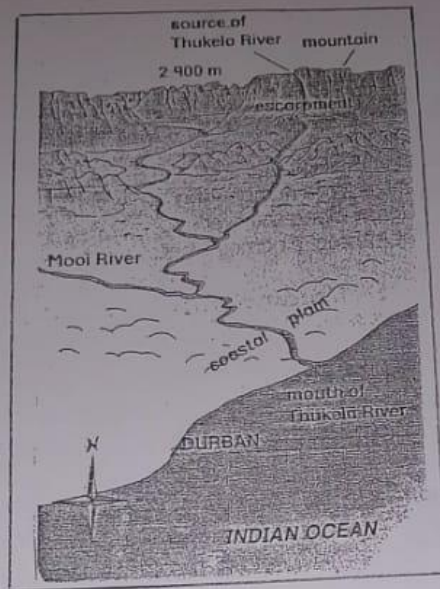
- Dams cover large areas of farmland.
- Dams change the flow of rivers.
- Dams may increase floods.

Building roads

There are millions of kilometres of roads in the world. People build roads to make transport easier. Some roads are simple sand roads. Other roads are big motorways. All roads change the land.

Question 2

Study the journey of the Thukela River and answer the following questions in full sentences.



2.1 In which mountains is the source of the Thukela River?

_____ (2)

2.2 How high above sea level is the source of the Thukela River?

_____ (2)

2.3 Name the tributary of the Thukela river.

_____ (2)

2.4 What is the direction of the mouth of the Thukela River from Durban (compass direction).

_____ (2)

4.4 What is a catchment area?

(2)

4.5. What is a coastline?

(2)

4.6. What is a tributary river?

(2)

(10)

Question 5

Most people in South Africa live in the flat areas and valleys between the mountains and the coastal plain. Few people live in the mountain areas or on the escarpment.

Write two reasons why few people live in mountain areas in full sentences.

5.1 _____

(2)

5.2 _____

(2)

Write three reasons why many people live in flat areas and valleys in full sentences.

5.3 _____

(2)

5.4 _____

(2)

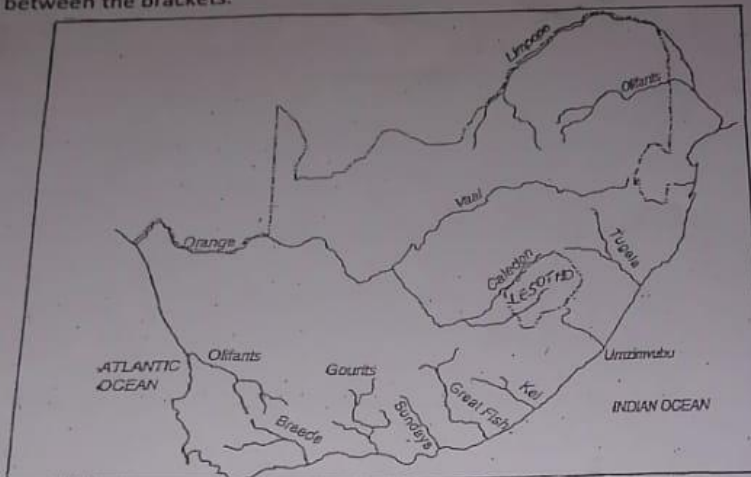
5.5 _____

(2)

(10)

Question 6

Study the map of the main rivers in South Africa below and underline the correct word between the brackets.



- 6.1 Most of South Africa's rivers start in the (mountain areas/sea areas). (1)
6.2 The (Vaal River/Great Fish River) flows through Eastern Cape. (1)
6.3 The (Olifants River/Umzimvubu River) flows into the Atlantic Ocean. (1)
6.4 The (Limpopo River/Vaal River) separates South Africa and Zimbabwe. (1)
6.5 The (Indian Ocean/ Atlantic Ocean) is in the East of South Africa. (1) (5)

Question 7

State whether the following statements are True or False.

- 7.1 Most of South Africa's provinces are on the plateau. _____ (1)
7.2 Namaqualand is in Limpopo province. _____ (1)
7.3 The drainage basin is also a catchment area. _____ (1)
7.4 Dams in South Africa are all natural. _____ (1)
7.5 A spring can be a source of a river. _____ (1)
7.6 There are very few human activities in the coastal plain. _____ (1)
7.7 There are many mountains in South Africa. _____ (1)
7.8 Some rivers do not have waterfalls. _____ (1)
7.9 The Gariep-Orange River is the largest river in South Africa. _____ (1)
7.10 South Africa has the longest coastline _____ (1) (10)

2.5 What is the direction in which the Thukela River flows as it enters the Indian Ocean?

_____ (2)

_____ (10)

Question 3

Match the place names in column A with their descriptions in column B. Write the letters only below the numbers.

Column A – Place names		Column B - Descriptions		
1. Pilgrim'rest	A	Where the sun rises.		
2. Gauteng	B	The river where there are lot of monkeys.		
3. Mpumalaga	C	Where the traveller found peace.		
4. Apies River	D	The stream of the Nile		
5. Nylstroom	E	Where gold is found.		
1	2	3	4	5

(5)

Question 4

Read the questions below carefully and answer them in full sentences. All the answers must start with the underlined words.

4.1 What the source of the the river?

_____ (2)

4.2 What is a river mouth?

_____ (2)

4.3 What is a river system?

_____ (2)

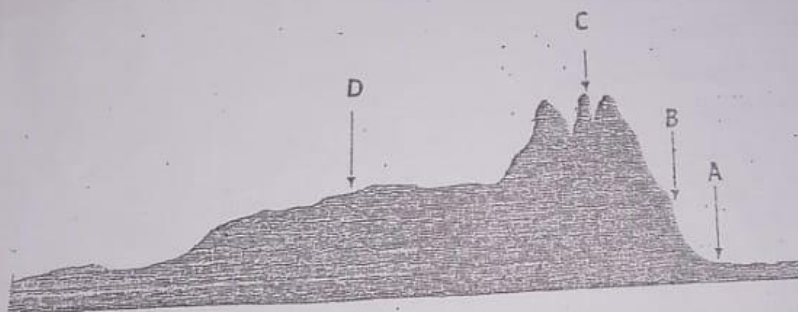
Question 1

1.1 Use the words inside the box to complete the statements below.

pass	cliff	escarpment
Coastal plain	plateau	plain high mountains

- 1.1.1 A narrow strip of land next to the coastline. _____ (1)
- 1.1.2 A high-lying area in the central part of South Africa _____ (1)
- 1.1.3 The edge of the plateau. _____ (1)
- 1.1.4 A very steep rock face. _____ (1)
- 1.1.5 Another name for a gap in the mountain. _____ (1)
- 1.1.6 A large flat area. _____ (1)
- (6)

1.2 Label the diagram below, use some of the words inside the box above.



- 1.2.1 -A _____ (1)
- 1.2.2 -B _____ (1)
- 1.2.3 -C _____ (1)
- 1.2.4 -D _____ (4)
- (10)

People and mountains

Most people in South Africa live in the flat areas and valleys between the mountains and the coastal plain. Many people also live on the flat areas of the plateau. Few people live in the mountain areas or on the escarpment.

Reasons few people live in high mountain areas	Reasons more people live in flat areas and valleys
• The land is too steep. • The weather is too cold. • The soil is not good for farming. • It is difficult to build roads.	• The land is flatter for farming. • The weather is warmer. • There are bigger rivers. • There is more space to build settlements and roads.



How physical features influence where people live

South Africa from above (physical map)

The build of South Africa

When geographers describe what the land looks like, they use words such as flat, hilly, mountainous, high, low and steep. These words describe the **build of the land**.

The next two drawings show the build of the land across South Africa, from the Atlantic Ocean in the west to the Indian Ocean in the east.

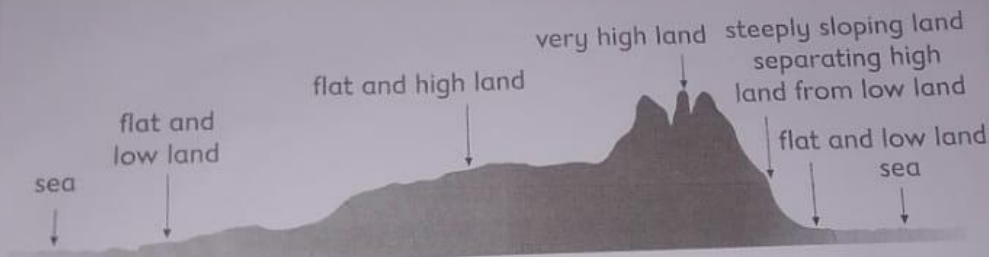


Figure 1.1: High and low land across South Africa

High and low land

In South Africa most of the low land is next to the coast. The low, flat land closest to the sea is mostly at the same height as the sea. This land is therefore described as being at sea level. Much of the centre of the country is flat and high above sea level, with some steep mountains.

